

**Heritage Impact Assessment for the property known as
Inchanga Hotel, farm 'The Drift' (Grant 906)
portions 264-266 of 6, Inchanga**



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Inchanga Hotel, farm 'The Drift', (Grant 906)
portions 264-266 of 6, Inchanga**

C. W. TOMKINS,
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Head Office and Warehouse:

PINE STREET, DURBAN, 10th December 1906, 190

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1. Introduction

Debbie Whelan from Archaic Consulting was approached by Mr Graham Braum to conduct a Heritage Impact Assessment of the site of the Inchanga Hotel where he is currently working on additions and alterations. The scope of work includes the addition of an extra hotel wing and also a conference centre. These additions are intended to make the hotel a more viable economic option, capitalizing on its central position between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, as well as increasing the possibilities of providing overnight accommodation.

Disclaimer:

Please note that this is a document contains out of necessity some words and phrases that are today deemed incorrect. The author wishes to apologise for the use of these terms but their use cannot be avoided in the context of this report, with reference to *quoted* documentation.

Also, where quotations have been made, and testimonies given, the author has not attempted to edit this material. Where publications have a question mark in the date, it means that the date of publication is not known.

It is also to be noted that whilst the author has had a mere glance at the plans and elevations provided to the Hotel Manager, Mr Johanssen, it has merely been to ascertain the scale of the development and the general positioning of the intended sites for extension. In addition, Mr Johanssen kindly pointed out the physical extent of the additions. Thus, recourse has been made to this information in the compilation of this report.

2. Methodology

The author is aware that the building was designed by William Street-Wilson and used this as a starting point. Records at the Killie Campbell Collections were scrutinized as well as the land registers from the Deeds Office, the survey diagrams, for this particular piece of property, as well as information in terms of documents, maps and photographs gleaned from the Provincial Archives Repository. Other seminal works architectural works dealing with turn of the century architecture were also consulted. Central to the development of the Inchanga Hotel was the railways, and this fact elicited some investigation as to the realignment of the railway line at the end of the 1880's. It is important to note that William Street-Wilson's original drawings for the Inchanga Hotel are lodged in the Barrie Biermann Architecture Library drawing collection at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

3. Short history of the site

The site on which the Inchanga Hotel sits has had a varied and, sometimes, notorious history. The property originally formed part of the original grant farm Kafirdrift, grant 906, sold to the widow of Jacobus Groenewald in 1850. As with most of the early farms, this was an extensive portion of land. In 1879 this property was sold on to a Mr Waite Barrett. In this year, the Natal Government Railways (NGR) pushed the railway line as far as Inchanga, leading to Mr Waite Barrett allowing the erection of a Natal Government Railways train station on his property. This stop was known as Wallacetown, perhaps after Mr Wallace, the agent for Messers Whythes and Jackson, involved with the construction of the lines. This stop was a mere 300m away from the current Inchanga Station building.

From the Wallacetown stop, the railway line then crossed the notorious Inchanga Viaduct, which consisted of 7 iron spans, each over 24m long and at the highest 27m above the ground (Fig 2). The first train to cross this was the contractors locomotive, named the 'Ulundi', on its completion in 1880.

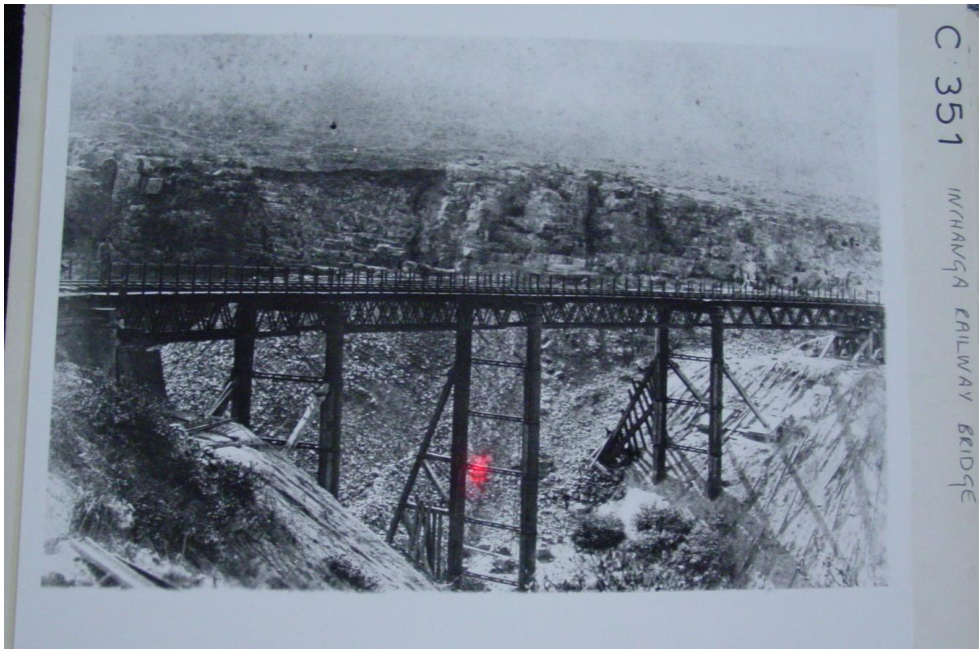
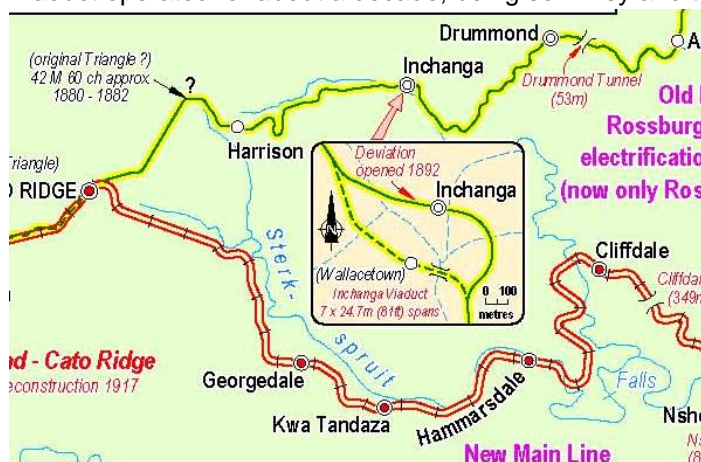


Fig 1: The Inchanga Viaduct, photo C351, Natal Archives Repository

The Inchanga Viaduct was a legendary structure, ballasted down by buckets of water, which not only stabilized the bridge but also indicated whether the driver was traveling too fast, leading to dire consequences. On windy days, passengers had to alight and walk across themselves. This Viaduct operated for about a decade, being so flimsy and terrifying that it was discontinued.¹



(http://www.umgenisteamrailway.co.za/inchanga_station.htm)²

With the necessary rerouting of the line to avoid the Inchanga Viaduct, (Fig 2), the new station was built at Inchanga, in 1892. This was (allegedly) originally a double storey affair, but was 'renovated' at the beginning of the twentieth century to take the form that it is today.

The farm Kafirdrift 906 then appeared subject to a flurry of subdivisions- in 1882 a portion was sold back into the Groenewald family, to MS Meijer (formerly Groenewald), who then sold a portion to Elsje de Kock. The official Land Registers show it being transferred back to the Natal Government in 1896, where the major subdivisions occurred. (See Appendix 1 and 2)

Upon Tomkin's approach to the Natal Government requesting the availability of land in the Inchanga area in 1897, (III/1/120-SG3313/1897) Subdivision D consisting of a number of portions

¹ The Inchanga Viaduct was only dismantled in 1897 and portions reused for the crossing of other small chasms, such as the railway bridge at Mpolweni.

² The author finds this a peculiar fact, and suspects that this may have been based on the picture of the station in the photographs of the Inchanga Hotel in Fig 3.

near the extant station appears to have been made available, for Tomkins and Farman came into possession in 1898. In 1902, Tomkins sold off a portion to Crowder, who also had associations with the Inchanga Hotel. From then on the different portions were in the hands of a variety of people, most notably EJ Alexander who acquired a substantial number of the lots between 1937 and 1943, which formed his estate in 1976 before being purchased by the Barnes family. Lots 264-266 of portion D of Kafirdrift 906 has always had an hotel operating from it, on the site certainly, since at least 1898. Since early days, the position of this portion of land would have been at a critical position in the stagecoach and post cart route between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, long before the advent of rail, making it a logical place for overnight travelers. Thus, the idea of an hotel adjunct to the railway station was not a newly conceived idea.

4. Short history of the building:

There had been a hotel on the site for many years, as archival sources reveal the presence of the 'Inchanga Hotel'³ as early as 1878, where 'VM Lazenby forwards petition from inhabitants of Ward 6, Pietermaritzburg County, for the establishment of a pound at the Inchanga Hotel' (CSO646-1878/2200). The owner/proprietor at this time seems to have been a Mr James Underhill, who complained about the Road overseer, Mr Goode, arriving inebriated on the Post Cart⁴ (PWD2/200-PWD(U)2/1876) In 1895, it was owned by Mr S Carne, who complained about the state of the road to his hotel, a long standing issue as in the next decade, CW Tomkins, the subsequent private owner, had to construct the road to the hotel from the station himself.



Fig 3: the Inchanga Hotel (and station in foreground from the 1906 'Twentieth Century impressions of Natal)

This CW Tomkins purchased the property from the Natal Government. His original reason for purchase was the proximity of the railway station, as his business was as an entrepreneur running 'Refreshment Rooms' under contract to the NGR. He is described in the 1904 Natal Almanac and Directory as 'Caterer' with his telegraphic address as 'Refresh' based at 90 St Andrews Street in Durban. (Almanac;1904) In the 1906 letterhead on the page 2 of this report, he appears to have moved his head office to the Inchanga Hotel. This enterprise consisted of a number of different areas, including the institution of a large and well considered plant nursery, which was lauded for its extent and variety in the provision of planting for the railways.⁵ There was also a bottling plant and a small brewery, and a Refreshment Room known as the Wallacetown Restaurant (pers.comm; Mr Johanssen) The construction of the present Inchanga Hotel from 1901 onwards on the site further entrenched his influence.

³ Whether it was on the same site or not, it is not known by the author at this point.

⁴ Note- this is prior to the arrival of the rail head which arrived in 1879.

⁵ Plants on the sides of the railways were considered important in minimizing the spread of veld fires through burning soot that was expelled from the steam engines.

The very restrained Gothic Revival building as it stands today was designed by William Street-Wilson, the architect of, amongst others, the Pietermaritzburg City Hall, the Pietermaritzburg Station and the old Durban Station. It was started in 1901 and completed in 1903 (sources on this vary) and the red brick allegedly came as left over stock from the building of the Pietermaritzburg City Hall, which was completed about the same time. This would mean that CW Tomkins was operating out of different premises for his 'Refreshment Rooms', possibly at the Inchanga Station building, when the troop train passed through in 1899, and he fed 20 members of the Gloucester Regiment (charged £2) in May 1900.(CSO 1647-1900/3357)

Comments on the hotel on the site run as follows:

- 1895: 'A comfortable hotel is established close to the station, and the scenery in the vicinity is of a fine description. At the refreshment bar here meals are served, and sufficient time allowed to partake of them. Every convenience for both male and female passengers is also provided, and the greatest possible care observed in all details affecting the comfort of the traveling public.' (Ingram;1895:162-3)
- 1903: 'Inchanga, where a wait of twenty minutes for refreshments is announced. A large and elaborately-appointed hotel has recently been erected and is sure to be well patronized by persons desirous of deriving health and pleasure from this invigorating neighbourhood.' (Harrison;1903:47)
- 1906: 'he has made Inchanga.....the centre of his extensive operations as caterer for the refreshment rooms on the Natal Railways. He has established here an electric light plant, a large bakery and a mineral water factory, and from this point dispatches daily consignments to reach the requirements of the various buffets and dining-rooms under his energetic and capable control' Authority:1906)
- 1911: It is to be regretted that the hotel built by the late refreshment contractor to the railway department, and which was equipped in quite and up-to-date style, is at present closed to the public. It is built on an excellent site, and being within easy distance of either Durban or Maritzburg was very popular in holiday seasons' (Authority:1911:114)⁶

The period of Tomkin's tenure in the history of the Inchanga Hotel, however, seems to have been the most colourful and dynamic. The location of the railway line as central to Durban and Pietermaritzburg was critical in the running of the Hotel and the allied functions that it provided. The central position was also important in Tomkins' business being able to supply all the railway refreshment stops along the way. Many of these 'Refreshment Rooms' along the line appear to have been operated using indentured Indian labour, as the countless references to application for indentured servants in the archives testify.



Fig 4: The Inchanga Hotel from the games terrace from the 1906 volume

⁶ This suggests that by 1911 Tomkins had passed away, but his Deceased Estate details have not been found.



*Fig 5:
Inchanga
Hotel from the
same source*

For many years after the death of Tomkins, the building was known as the Colorado, in the hands of its owners for many years at one time. As a piece of architectural history, its almost intact design as originally carried out by William Street-Wilson, one of the most important architects of his period, it is important in its peripheral position and also its simplicity. As a part of the social history of this part of the Old Main Road from Durban through to Pietermaritzburg, it is very important, as it not only displays a varied and eccentric business venture from the turn of the twentieth century, but its connection with the Inchanga Viaduct, its realignment to avoid the Viaduct, (which was the first portion of the redesign of the 'Main Line') and its nursery providing planting all form important parts of the history of the Natal Government Railways.

5. Analysis of the main structure



Fig: 6 The Inchanga Hotel from the south

The Inchanga Hotel is a symmetrical building, constructed out of the salmon brick that characterizes Pietermaritzburg buildings with which it was contemporary. The four gables on the southerly elevation, facing the N3 highway, reflect this symmetry, with the two central gables being larger than the outer two. Because of the measured nature of these gables, reflecting them in the proposed additions is problematic, and if ventured, should be carried out with care (see notes in section 6). Each of the gables has paired windows, in the central two slightly unbalanced. The symmetrical entrance is signified from below by the grand and well proportioned stairs leading up the steep terraces, and also by the larger single window above the entrance,

compared with the paired windows in the recessive upper storey between the main gables and the secondary gables. It is a simple, considered and gracious structure.

It is an imposing structure in the landscape, and its position of power should be retained. This means that the new structures should play a subtle second fiddle to the hotel, allowing it to continue to command its surrounds.



Fig 7: Montage showing games terrace from the hotel terrace- note the steep drop

Importantly, the connection with the station is its reason for existence- the Inchanga Station and the Inchanga Hotel are inextricably connected, and the links which these two structures enjoyed in the past could well be repaired to both practical and nostalgic extent. The notion of wandering through well-clipped and carefully manicured, symmetrical open space then descending across a 'ha-ha' into a relative un-constructed wilderness towards the Station is sympathetic with the romantic landscaping ideas of the period.

6. Recommended design approach

The addition of extra rooms onto the eastern front, and the construction of a conference hall and necessary extras is not problematic in principle. The site is large, there are large falls to each side of the building to the south and to the east (Figs 8 and 9) and this makes for an ideal opportunity to extend the practical life of the hotel complex.



Fig 8 and 9 showing falls to the east and the south

On the eastern side- continuity between the extant hotel building and the new wing should be dealt with in a careful manner. A suggestion would be to detach the new structure almost

completely, using a non-obtrusive and contemporary material such as glass to effect the transition (Fig 10 no 1)

- A 'first-prize' option would be to have access off the veranda and the new complex accessible off this 'negative' linkage. This means that the massing of the new structure could work on contemporary floor-to-ceiling ratios and lines of connectivity such as string courses could reflect different items on the main building such as the line of the gutters, or the balcony edge (Fig 10 no 3)⁷. Vertical movement through stairs would understandably work through the fall of the land as the new wing followed this, but could all be contained within this structure. Although there is the possibility of echoing the gable forms, this should be explored carefully. If this approach was to be looked at, then the pitch of the gable must be the same as the original and the gable end wall should be blank- it acknowledges the main building but is deliberately more modest, and there is no activity in the space that detracts from the main building's gable. The new extension building itself should be as simple as possible. Proportions such as those in the existing windows (fig 10 no 4) could be replicated.
- The second option- if it is critical that the buildings be physically connected- is to choose the point of entry at a position that will cause the least damage to the structure, either on the upper **or** the lower level. Again, the transitional use of an appropriate negative element between them is critical, aiding in separating the old from the new and minimizing the competition between them.

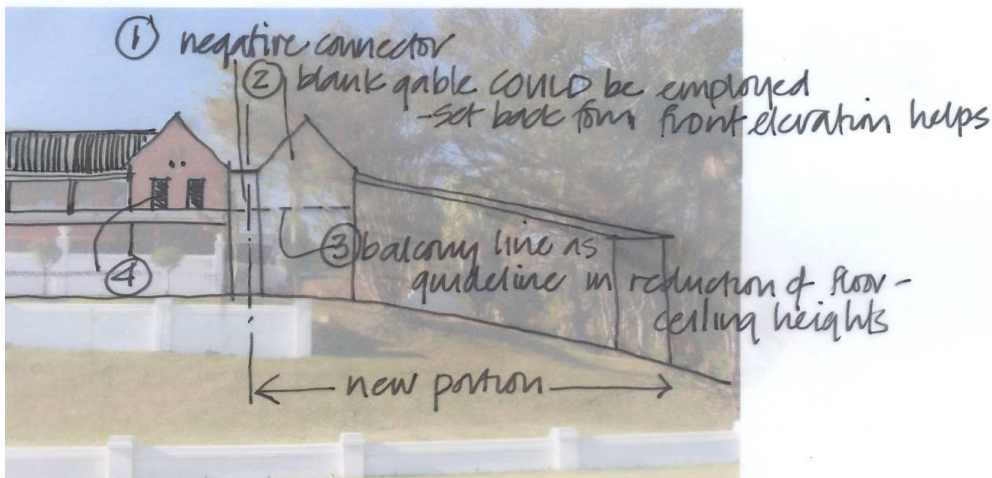


Fig 10 – one suggested method of addition

- With regards to the conference centre and allied functions on the pool terrace level, the large drop in level and the level site at the base makes the construction of new buildings an easier task. However, the importance of the Inchanga Hotel is largely its aspect from below, thus the means by which this space is cluttered, especially with a building the scale of a conference hall, is the point to note. A suggestion is that this (potentially) large building be constructed in such a way that a mono-pitch or saw-tooth roof with (north, if there is any) light be constructed parallel to the retaining wall, such that it reads as a large veranda, and as a single line. As noted earlier, echoing the gables will be difficult to execute, and the likelihood of them visually competing is great. It is suggested that replication of the gables on this building is inappropriate.

⁷ In the drawing, (Fig 10) reference has been made to existing scale rather than scaling down to present day floor-to-ceiling standards'

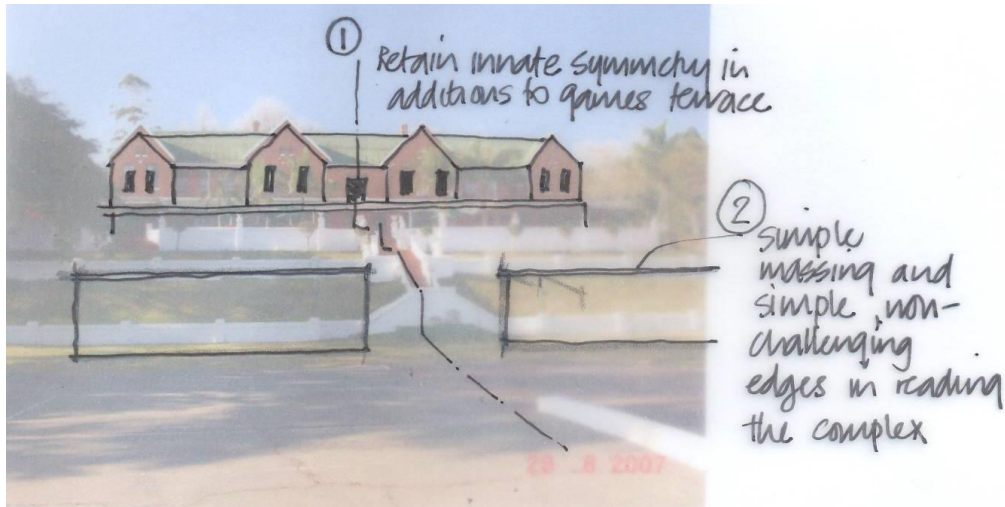


Fig 11- an approach to additions on the games terrace

- Materials in both instances should be simple, contemporary, and applied using the main building as clues, though not mimicking the old structure directly. This involves the use of corrugated sheeting, vertically proportioned windows, and, possibly red brick, (but this really depends on availability and colour). It is perhaps better to tone down the massiveness of new red stretcher coursed face-brick with painted plaster. Use of vernacular material such as thatch should be avoided, as it introduces muddled textures (besides lots of maintenance) and architectural language.
- The symmetry of the site is important, and the balanced massing of structures on each side of the stairway is to be considered. (fig 11)

7. Connection with the station

Bearing in mind the manner in which the station and the hotel are connected, a great opportunity exists to connect these two buildings in a practical and aesthetic manner, ensuring, particularly, the eventual longevity of the Station building. Appendix 4 shows a Public Works Department Map that allocates the portion of the road to be constructed by their department, and the portion up to the Inchanga Hotel to be constructed by CW Tomkins. This symbiosis is intrinsic in the history of the Inchanga Hotel.



Fig 12: The station building -hotel approach



Fig 13: Road to the hotel built by Tomkins



Fig 14: approach from the station



Fig 15: looking back to station-inside gates



Fig 16: Aerial image: proximity and contrast - symmetrical hotel environs vs natural approach

8. Conclusion

With most additions and alterations to historic buildings, it is the 'how' that matters. The Inchanga Hotel site allows extensions to the east and the south of the existing building with ease, given the large land falls within the site, and sitting on the promontory as it does. Decisions in principle to add onto these two elevations are good.

However, as with most buildings of this era, the temptation to mimic is great, and this should be avoided at all costs. Rather, new work should be executed in the spirit of contemporary building practice, but with a simple elegance learned from its predecessor. Also, as noted, replication of the gables is also to be approached with care, and similar guidelines to the existing could be used. Should the gable be copied, it is important that the appropriate pitch and scale be used, but that it is also in specific positions and not arbitrarily applied throughout any new works.

Using aesthetic information that can be gleaned from the old building such as string courses, edges, corners, balustrade heights, etc can assist in knitting together the new and the old, without having to subscribe to building standards of the past. When connections are made, they should be simple and 'negative' such as glass or plain plaster.

Regarding material, the use of corrugated roof sheeting, in an 'S' profile, is acceptable, replication of the red brick may prove tricky and busy. This may be mitigated in part by plasterwork, providing a neutral wall covering that can be painted and does not compete with the soft red brick of the original building. Application of 'broekie' lace and frippery is not appropriate, unless empirical information can be found as to where it was located and what it consisted of.

It is important also to note that what is submitted in this report is suggestive in nature, not prescriptive. *The new additions will be good pieces of architecture if they sit quietly next to the old building, and do not attempt to convey any notions of their own grandeur.*

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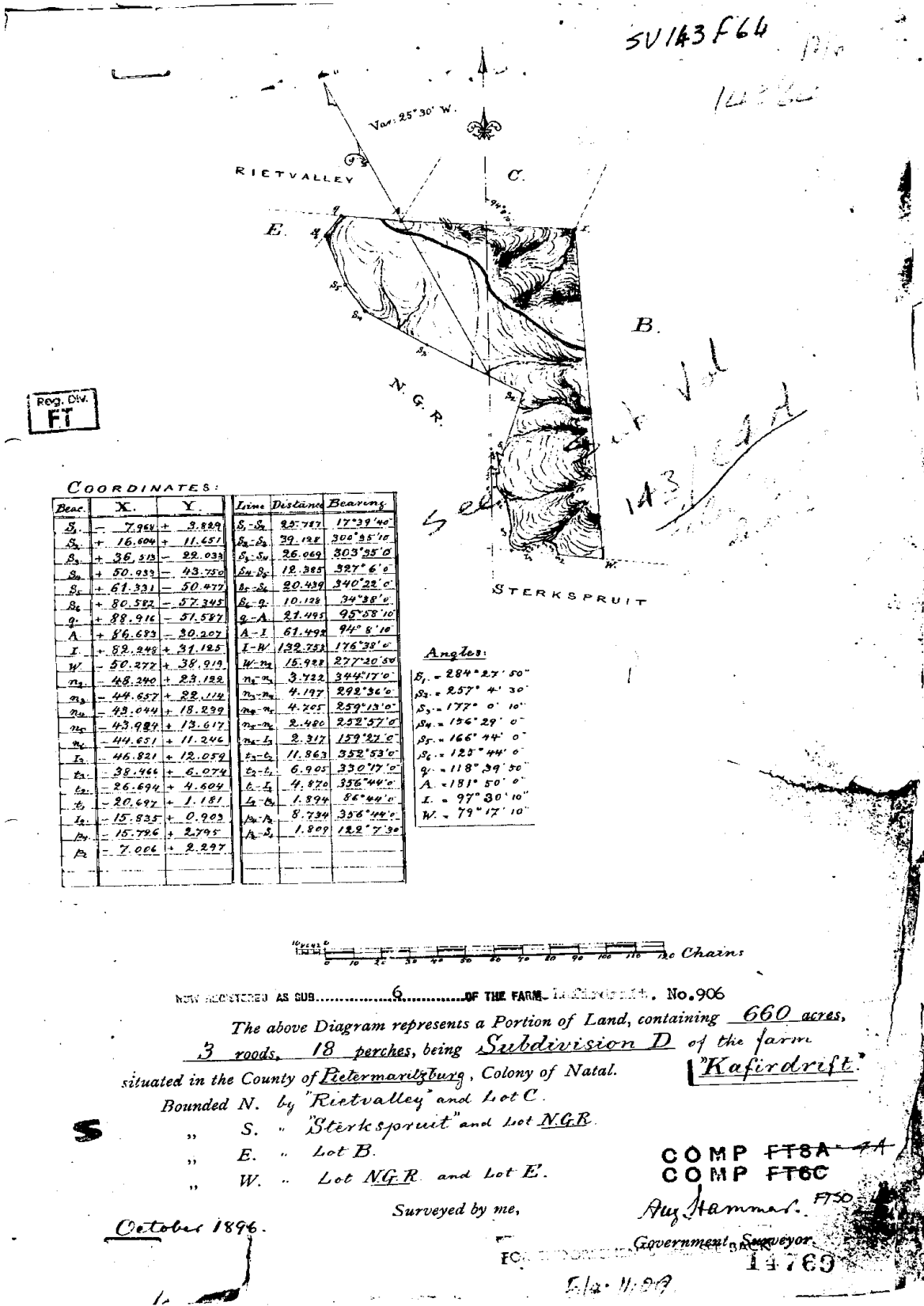
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10. Appendices:

Appendix 1: Survey of subdivisions of Kafirdrift, 1896



Appendix 3- letter by Mr CW Tomkins defending conduct at the hotel (1906)

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Head Office and Warehouse:

PINE STREET, DURBAN, 10th December 1906, 19

The Resident Magistrate,
 CAMPERDOWN.

Dear Sir,

The following is an extract from a letter which I have received from my Agent, Mr G. H. Spomer, of Timber Street, Maritzburg.

"The Clerk of the Peace who was present at the Licensing Board yesterday informed me that the Government has received complaints about your Hotel and that you had better be careful or you would lose your license. He did not tell me what the complaints were, but I thought it best to inform you so that you could look into the matter yourself".

I shall be glad to know the nature of the complaints for my own protection, as I have no wish to lose the License of a Hotel like Inchanga, through no fault of my own.

I have recently engaged a new Manager & his wife, and they will thoroughly look after the place.

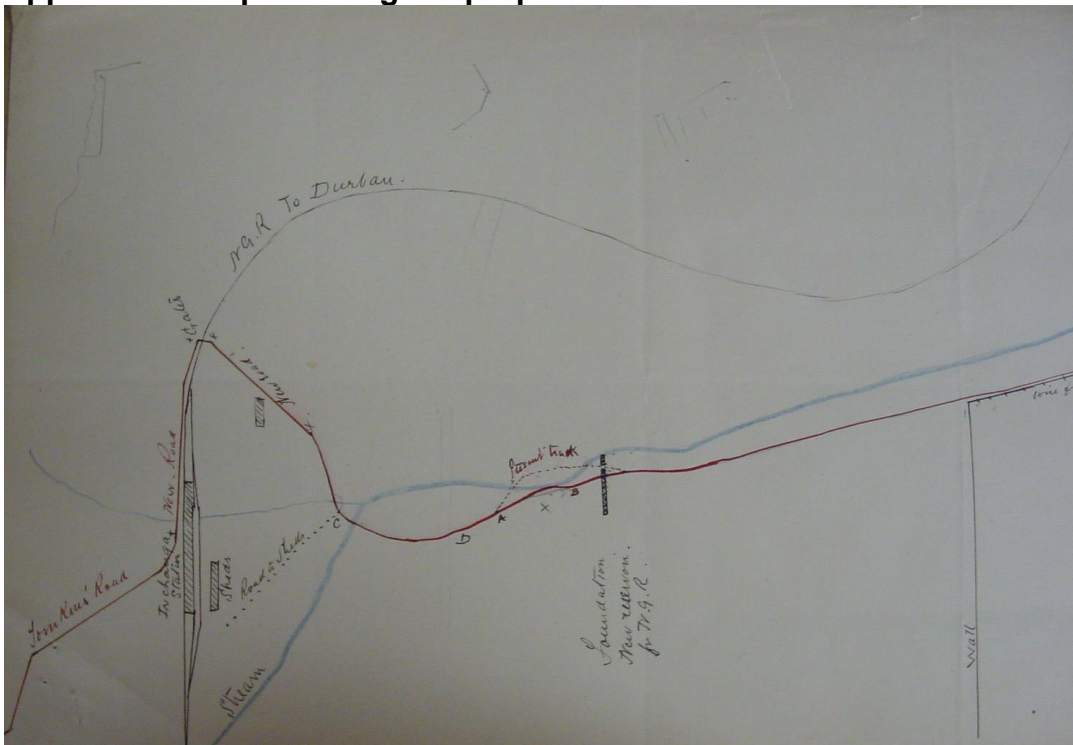
I have been compelled to close the Billiard Room, as against a few Railway Clerks at the Station, owing

The Resident Magistrate, Camperdown. Continued.

to their being dishonest enough to rip the Billiard Table cloth, and there not being a man amongst them who would acknowledge that he had done it.

Yours faithfully,

Appendix 4- Map showing the proposed new road to the station- 1902



Appendix 5: Map showing the points between which PWD road would be constructed -1902



Appendix 6 : Showing farms in the area as per the Masson Map of 1904



Appendix 7: Further evidence of the hotel's bawdy history- 1898

MINUTE PAPER.

GENERAL MANAGER,

NATAL GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS.

SUBJECT

Canteens adjoining Railway Stations

To Hon. Minister of Lands & Works,

1. I find it very difficult indeed to maintain discipline amongst the working staff employed on the Railway, in consequence of the facility which they enjoy, of obtaining intoxicating liquor, when at road-side stations.

2. The station Refreshment Rooms are under control, the Lessee being under an obligation by his agreement, not to supply liquor to the working staff of the Department, and this obligation, I am very glad to testify, is well respected.

3. The Rule of the Department is also sufficiently distinct, that "Servants of the Department, while on duty, are not allowed to enter a Station Refreshment Room, except by permission of the Station Master, or person in charge of the station, and they are forbidden to take, or have in their possession, spirits or liquor when on duty". I have recently had under notice, cases in which men have obtained drink from canteens which are within ^{easy} access of the stations or the line, notably, Bothas Hill, Traffic Hotel, Inchanga, and Cato Ridge, and the vigilance of the Station Masters and other Officers is insufficient to check the supply of liquor to servants of the Department. I have just dismissed one driver, and reduced another, for taking drink obtained

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